Reila Bird-DuesingAssignment #1 May 8th, 2009

**“Evaluation Made Very Easy Accessible, and Logical”**

K. Farell, M. Kratzmann, S. McWilliam N. Robinson S. Saunders J. Ticknor K. White (July 2002)

**Part One:**

* Evaluation is.... “A course of action used to assess the value or worth of a program” (p.8).
* Types of evaluation: process, impact, and outcome
* Assessing needs “...can be a valuable tool for determining what your group or organization should aim to accomplish through your evaluation. An outline of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats [SWOT(C)] analysis is included—a simple way of organizing ideas and providing direction” (p.9).

**What is the Empowerment Model? (p.11)**

* Empowerment evaluation is designed to guide participants – program providers and/or clients – through critical self- evaluation and reflection such that people help themselves and improve their programs.
* Empowerment evaluation is a philosophy or way of thinking about evaluation – it is intended to be more of a democratic process involving all stakeholders (or representatives of these groups) – to foster evaluation capacity-building and self-determination. The responsibility of conducting this type of evaluation falls on the group of stakeholders. The group mediates its own evaluation proceedings--being self- and group-reflective, and attempting to keep personal biases and agendas in check.

**What is the Logical Model? (p.13)**

It is merely a useful tool to show in a picture or diagram what is going to be done, and what the expected results of the program or evaluation are. Some of the benefits are:

* Useful resource in program planning and evaluation
* Helps stakeholders to understand overall structure, function of program
* Helps to ensure that program activities and intended results correspond
* Helps identify key questions for the evaluation
* Conveys key elements of the program to policy makers, staff, external funding agencies, media, and colleagues
* Helps to reveal where steps in the program break down

**What is the CDC Framework? (p.15)**

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) organized an Evaluation Working Group that developed a framework for conducting evaluation, specifically of public health programs. The result is a six-step process that is meant to follow a continuous cycle – meaning that the components should not be considered independent of each other, but as inter-related and dependent.

**The Six-Step Process**

1. Engage Stakeholders
2. Describe the Program
3. Focus the Evaluation Design
4. Gather Credible Evidence
5. Justify Conclusions
6. Ensure Use and Sharing of Lessons

**Four key concepts are identified and must be considered throughout the evaluation process to help ensure that it is effective.**

**Utility** This refers to the usefulness of the evaluation and requires ensuring that the information needs of the stakeholders are met.

**Feasibility** This refers to how practical or realistic the evaluation plan is in terms of the time and resources required to complete it.

**Propriety** This refers to the consideration of legal and ethical matters, as well as the welfare of those involved in the evaluation and/or affected by it.

**Accuracy** This refers to the **reliability** and **validity** of the evaluation and involves making clear and explicit statements about goals, objectives, procedures, purposes, conclusions, and sources of information as well as about the biases and perspectives of the evaluator(s).

**What is Participatory Evaluation? (p.18)**

* Participatory projects are based on taking direction from, and working with (rather than working on), the people who are in programs and clients at organizations.
* The goal of participatory evaluation is to involve as many people as possible in the process. This helps ensure that many voices are heard and taken into account in the final evaluation report. Ideally, the evaluation process will involve a diverse representation of the stakeholders who will contribute to all levels of the evaluation—planning, information gathering, analysis, and dissemination.

**What is Dissemination? (p.20) “**Sharing evaluation ‘learnings’ is important for informing **policy** and practice, and for providing a forum for discussing future programming recommendations” (p.20).

**Part Two:**

The information presented in the document “Evaluation Made Very Easy Accessible, and Logical”, will not only benefit me as an educator, but it will help with my roles as a parent and school community council member. At the present time I do not teach in a school full-time, however my first priority, is to ensure that my children’s needs are met at home, school and in the community. As a parent, I am an advocate and believe that I must work together with the school in my community. I choose to be an active member of the school council and a board member of community clubs. Therefore, if I want to have a voice about my children’s education, I must be engaged with the school and the community on various levels. My current role as an educator is in the form of a substitute teacher and Graduate Studies student. As an educator, it is my responsibility to encourage parents and community members to become actively involved in the learning environment. By nature I am a somewhat of a “reflective-practioner” who is always evaluating and re-evaluating my own practices. Thus, I feel it is important that I use my skills that I have acquired in evaluating to help improve, introduce, or change current programming in the educational world and/or in my community. As a result of my roles, I consider myself to be a stakeholder who wants to be involved and have a voice in my own children’s lives and hopefully impact others at the same time.

Reading about program evaluation in depth gave me a better understanding of the extensive process that is required to do an effective job in evaluating a program. I would like to learn more about the Logical Model and the CDC Framework. Over the years I have been involved in two informal program evaluations where one program evaluation was directly related to a school division initiative and the other program evaluation was conducted for a community-based program. My involvement with the evaluations was extensive and time consuming, however I did learn a great deal from the practical hands-on experience. At the time I did not have any formal training in the area of program evaluation, but managed to produce a report with my limited amount of skills. Looking back, I wonder how I effective I truly was as an evaluator. I question how I could have changed my approach and/or process. Perhaps if I had a framework such as the CDC Framework in place, my program evaluation would have been more effective. I’d definitely be interested to see other program evaluation models too!

Currently, I have chosen a different path in life and I am not certain if, and when, I will return to the teaching profession. Although I enjoy teaching, I do not want to rush back to the classroom, but rather, I see myself working in the area of educational policy and programming. Below are some quotes from both the “Evaluation Made Very Easy Accessible, and Logical” and the PowerPoint presentation which stood out and made me think about the importance of program evaluation.

“The uniqueness of the empowerment approach to evaluation lies in its acknowledgment of and deep respect for the knowledge and experience of program and organization participants, their ability to identify program problems, and their creativity in developing and carrying out solutions” (p.11).

“It is important to seek opinions and participation from those who have an interest in the program being evaluated, particularly those most affected by the program and the evaluation” (p.16).

“The goal of participatory evaluation is to involve as many people as possible in the process. This helps ensure that many voices are heard and taken into account in the final evaluation report” (p 18).

“There are 5 key variables that are absolutely critical in evaluation use. They are in order of importance: people, people, people, people, and people.” Halcolm

“Research seeks to prove, evaluation seeks to improve…” Patton